The Sunday Tribune's News and Reviews of Books and Authors

More Memories of Mark Twain

By Burton Rascoe

ABROAD WITH MARK TWAIN AND EUGENE FIELD. By H. W. Fisher. Published by Nicholas L. Brown. New York, 1922.

MR. VAN WYCK BROOKS will exult in this book. You will recall that Mr. Brooks wrote a psycho-analytical study called "The Ordeal of Mark Twain," in which he set forth that Samuel L. Clemens was a thwarted genius who only partly realized his true capabilities, owing to his deference to the Puritanical scruples of Mrs. Clemens and to the demands of a backward civilization that he be a buffoon instead of the great satirist he was cut out to be. He laid much stress upon the importance of the fact that Mark Twain's family supervised and censored much of his writings, withholding some of it even yet from publication because of the unpopular and revolutionary ideas these works contain. Mr. Brooks examined with a critical miscroscope the letters and reported conversations of Mark Twain, seeking for evidence of his inner revolt against the restraints put upon him—and finding a great deal of it. Indeed, he found many bits of evidence in places where I could not see it even after he put his finger on the passage and told me it was there. I thought his was an excess of zeal, but what will Mr. Brooks make of this episode:

Mark Twain and Mr. Fisher had been shown a manuscript by Schopenhauer at the Royal Library in Berlin, the title of which was "Tetragamy." Mark asked Mr. Fisher what the title meant, and what the essay was about.

"Literally, it means marrying a fourth wife." I examined the first page of the manuscript. "Seems to deal with conditions due to monogamy."

"Good," exclaimed Mark, "I have always wanted to reform monogamy, when my wife isn't looking. Now, let's have the medicine straight."

Mr. Fisher copied out the original and later made a translation of it and sent it to Mark's hotel. A week later he called up to inquire if he had received the manuscript.

"Of course not. The wife got it, and you know, she won't let me read anything but tracts. I suppose she burnt our manuscript."

"Well," I said, "I have got a carbon copy and I will let you have that by and by."

"Not while I'm at home," he said, "for now she is on the scent she will watch out. She is dreadfully afraid that some one may corrupt me."

Again Mr. Fisher relates: "I honestly believe much of that rheumatism (which Mark suffered in Berlin) was put on. For Mark liked leisure above all things. When he did not feel like writing, he told Livy he 'had it bad,' and escaped a scolding. 'Livy' was an excellent wife to him, but she had the commercial spirit that Mark lacked—and God knows he needed prodding once in a while." One may easily imagine Mr. Brooks beating his breast in anguish at the thought of this great and simple man's resorting to petty deception that he might enjoy leisure from bread-winning labors with his pen. He will, doubtless, find great significance in the simple sentence: "Of Vienna women, Mark Twain used to say that they were so 'cussed pretty a man walking out with his wife feels relieved when he meets a plain one.'" And, with the psycho-analyst's quick perception of the covert wish, Mr. Brooks may find a personal lament in the episode at the circus where a little bareback rider had suffered a broken leg when her horse was frightened by a clown. "The clown has to get laughs," said Mark, "the girl has to risk her limbs, so that the manager may coin money. What a world this is, what a world! And you and I, too! I never thought of kicking myself for laughing when that poor girl broke her leg—nor did you, I bet."

But, at the risk of arousing Mr. Brooks's disgust, I shall record my belief that all these things are interesting and even revelatory, but that they do not indicate that Mark Twain had great gifts for satire which never fully bore fruit. I shall again record my belief that Mark Twain produced the best work he was capable of and that it is work with which I, for one, have no quarrel. A great artist, according to the not always accurate critical maxim, is one who reflects the spirit of his race and time. Mark Twain did that superbly. Mark Twain is the America of his period incarnate: a genial, rugged, inquisitive, practical-joking, boastful, boyish soul, irreverent, distrustful of authority, full of moral and ethical scruples, virile, insensitive to delicacy and subtlety, bad mannered and a little unhappy. Nothing reveals all this more sharply than this haphazard, episodic, unliterary record Mr. Fisher has got together out of the notes he took on Mark Twain's sayings and jokes during a long acquaintanceship.

Much has been made of the fact that Mark Twain was called upon to play the buffoon when he should have been using his gifts in other directions. The implication is that, by nature, he was not a buffoon at all. I think this is an erroneous notion. Mark Twain was a buffoon, and by this I do not mean to disparage him; for buffoonery, too, is a precious thing of which the world stands much in need. That is why Mr. Fisher's book is a valuable and delightful contribution to our visible records of the personal expression of Mark Twain. It is largely a record of buffoonery. This does not mean that it is not also significant, important, and even a bit pathetic in the light that it throws upon that lovable, affectionate, and much loved, simple humanitarian.

"From Paris Mark Twain usually returned disgruntled. His stories did not go in France, and there was that 'Dreyfus affair' that made him sick of the 'frog-eaters forever and a day.' Nor was Mark appreciated in Italy. 'The Dagoes' he used to say, 'like their humor colored with politics, of which I know nothing, or flavored with risqué stories which my wife won't let me write—there you are. As to France—one critical Madame gave me to understand that I am "lacking in the stupendous task of interpreting the great tableaux of real American life." See4 When a wet blanket of that kind is clapped on to you, what is the use of further effort? . . . I will tell you what is really the matter with France,' concluded Twain, 'Every Frenchman who can read and write has in his closet a frock coat embroidered with the lilies (or whatever the flower may be) of the Academie Francaise—hoping against hope that he may be elected to the Institute like Molière or Zola. Hence Monsieur is very uncritical and pronounces everything he doesn't understand "bosh"!"

This reveals, as does the famous Grant dinner at Chicago and the episode of the Concord sages, that Mark Twain's aptitude was, precisely, for buffoonery. Even if it was a limitation, it was for him a natural way of looking at things, not something that was imposed upon him. Without it, he would not have been Mark Twain, whatever else he might have been.

A Bookman's Day Book

(Continued from page four)

the chores the farmer's tradition relegates to women. O'Dea is a former Montana man, now in the advertising business in Chicago. He has tried to get into his plays something of the actual life of American farms. He is the first to introduce the 'shivaree,' so common an event in our country life, into literature."

JULY 25

Guy Eglington dropped in to call my attention to the poetry of **Amory Hare**, whose "Tossed Coins" was published last year and whose "The Swept Hearth" has just been published by Dodd, Mead & Co. I began reading the first book at once. It is an intensely personal expression of lyrical emotions, an autobiography almost of progressive happiness, joy, grief and sorrow, and yet so simple, delicate and lovely is the utterance that it has a universality that most intensely personal poems do not have.

About 9 o'clock to-night a taxi drove up and there came trooping up the stairs **Mary Blair**, dressed in pajamas, house slippers and raincoat; **Talulluh Bankhead** in bathing suit and cutaway coat; and **Edmund Wilson** jr., in a brown dressing gown and a top hat. They gave us forthwith a superb vaudeville performance. Talulluh imitated Gilda Gray, Emily Stevens, Sarah Bernhardt and Chick Sale. Mary recited "The Little Tin Soldier Is Covered With Dust" and gave a capital imitation of Michio Itow, and Bunny performed some feats of legerdemain and conjuring. It was all highly refreshing and amusing and I pondered the happy circumstances which allows so serious and studious a young man as Bunny to forget himself in a riot of giddy nonsense and absurdity. True enough, he did spill it to a slight extent by becoming grave later on and reciting Anatole France's forlorn and pessimistic comment upon the life of Racine, a lugubrious observation about the wrongness of things. I should have preferred, for the sake of the evening's impromptu perfection, that he and Talulluh did not repeat that they must seem very silly and that it was awfully decent of us to put up with it. Nothing could well have afforded us a more joyous evening.

Dear Burton Rascoe: Father James A. Cassidy, of St. Paul, has just published a book which, I rather believe, will not come to your attention, for the reason that it bears the imprint of a novitiate house—the Stratford Company, of Boston—and then, Father Cassidy is not particularly well known. But this book, the title of which is "The Women of the Gael," contains some material that taps the spring of my memory. To me the sustance of the issue is so delightful and of so full a flavor that I am persuaded to regard the sentiments in a recent letter of yours, namely, that if I came across a book which seemed of merit I should write you about it—as of honest value.

I had finished Padraic Colum's introduction and had opened the pages somewhere between the beginning and the middle, with a preponderance of the leaves held down under my left thumb. Immediately my eye was caught by a name: Grace O'Malley. Now, Grace O'Malley was the embodiment of both the Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady, with more than an inkling of Brunhilde and Jeanne d'Arc in the bargain. As the Lady Pirate of the Dark Rosaleen she is known to all Ireland; that I know, but I wonder how many people are acquainted with her famous escapades? For example, do many people know how overwhelmingly she snubbed Queen Elizabeth? Or of the manner she made fast her boat when, swooping down from nowhere, she assaulted and robbed some old moneybags? Purely rhetorical, Mr. Rascoe, for I fear they do not.

Writers on Julius Cæsar speak of the message: "I came, I saw," etc., as laconic. They may. But how would these same writers refer to the message that Grace O'Malley dispatched to Queen Elizabeth when good Queen Bess sent to her some valuable presents, which was, "Presents are not exchanged between equals!"

THOMAS ALEXANDER BOYD.

Light Luggage

By Ben Ray Redman

JIMINY. By Gilbert W. Gabriel. George H. Doran Company.

THE SIN OF MONSIEUR PETTIPON and Other Humorous Tales. By Richard Connell. George H. Doran Company.

HAPPY RASCALS. By F. Morton Howard. E. P. Dutton & Co.

THESE three books display a mythologic affinity, belonging as they do to that class of fiction—for the existence of which publishers unconvincingly vouch—known as summer reading. The men who supply our reading matter have, apparently, a theory to which they hold with admirable tenacity. Briefly and apart from any scientific documentation, it is that in summer the proximity of the sun and the consequent heat from its rays induce light-headedness in the book-buying public.

So, they argue, a special kind of book is requisite for this trying season of the year. It may be true. Personal experience would, however, lead me to the conclusion that Ethel M. Dell and Plotinus preserve their respective charms unimpaired throughout twelve months of the solar cycle; that Berta Ruck and Joseph Conrad are always in season for their admirers, and that in summer Pater's prose is even more cooling than the prose of the best "Saturday Evening Post" stylist.

Hence my use of the word "mythologic" in connection with summer reading. But if there is such a fiction classification these books most certainly belong in it; they are ideally suited for consumption in hammocks or on piazzas, near the sea or among high hills (assuming, of course, that they are ideally suited for consumption anywhere).

But the grouping of the three does not argue a common degree of excellence, nor even an identity in kind that can be particularly demonstrated. They fall into one great category, that is all. Within that probably mythical category they manifest individual differences. There is, for instance, the matter of style. Mr. Gabriel writes well, in the main; he is unsuccessful only when he tries to write too well. According the author of "Jiminy" such slight praise necessitates the proportionate statement that his companion authors may scarcely be said to write at all. At least there is nothing in their writing which suggests a consideration of the thing called style. They have, indeed, told a number of stories in comprehensible words, but beyond that statement one cannot go. There are other differences, of course: Mr. Connell and Mr. Howard are admitted humorists; Mr. Gabriel is whimsical. But considering these books as though they were the component parts of a single pudding is unfair to one of them. Having fortuitously grouped them for review, let us now separate them.

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"JIMINY" is a book so light that it forbids the touch of criticism. It is a delicate web that dissolves as we seek to hold it for examination between thumb and forefinger. That it is extremely fragile does not mean that it is extremely beautiful. Rather it is pretty always, and beautiful sometimes. It is the story of Jiminy Raferty, author of "Little Rhymes," and Benjamin Venvenuto Reni. It is a tale of love and search. Inevitably the man and the maid love each other and their search is for the lost sonnets of Raphael; those sonnets which, you will remember, Guido Reni guarded "like his own eye's apple," and you will remember, too, that

"Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried, too, 'Ours, the treasure!'
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished."

Well, this youthful pair of lovers feel that of all things worth possession in this world they long most for these sonnets recorded in the postscript to Browning's "Men and Women." There, presumably, they would read the perfect story of a perfect love. One wonders cynically what modesty sent them questing back through centuries for the mere shadow of a reality that lay between them. But, as was said before, "Jiminy" is fragile stuff that will not bear the weight of questioning. It calls for the same abandon on the reader's part as does a fairy tale. Read in the proper mood it is perfectly satisfactory—of its own little kind it is excellent. Mr. Gabriel writes well enough to try his fortunes with another kind.

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MR. CONNELL is a very different case. I do not know whether he has studied with one of the popular doctors of the American short story, whether he has burned much electricity over some "Manual of Story Writing," or whether he has analyzed success as it is to be found within the covers of our most generously paying magazines. Whatever the explanation, he is the master of a formula; or, to be fairer, of a snug little group of formulas that will insure him an editorial hearing any week-day before 5 o'clock. And let no one belittle Mr. Connell's gifts: they are solid, dependable, lucrative. They happen, merely, to place him at a safe distance from serious criticism. But they are worth attention. There is something appalling in the precision of the machine-made story; we tremble at our very certainty that it can't go wrong. Once we have learned the invariable sequence of its movements we are equipped for eternal prophecy: we can even anticipate the exact moment at which we shall not be surprised by the essential surprising twist.

These tales by Mr. Connell afford the same satisfaction that could be derived from a game of solitaire that invariably came out. The ingredients are mixed with a trained hand. We find suspense and denouement; but neither gifts of observation nor art in presentation are revealed. The book is a typical 100 per cent American product—standard parts, large quantity production—a flivver of the fiction market. It may be earnestly and safely recommended to that innumerable public which is supposedly responsible for the character of our popular magazines; the public which, editors assure us, knows what it wants and gets it. Sometimes I wonder if they know and if they do?

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FOR Mr. Howard a word will suffice. Like Mr. Connell he is announced as a humorist; and, also like his companion in review, he is really a competent performer in small-time fiction vaudeville. The stories in "Happy Rascals" belong to a class smaller than that graced by the tales in "Monsieur Pettipon," but they are no less stereotyped than Mr. Connell's productions. You all know Mr. Howard's characters—happy, carefree sailor men, who spend the greater part of their time in practical and impractical joking, mildly amusing at their best, always harmless, never tainted by reality; in short, such a crew as has sailed through many another book of pseudo-seafaring fiction.

The Daily Pow-wow of the Wits—By Duffy

From left to right, we observe: Murdock Pemberton, Brock Pemberton, John Peter Toohey (in a wrangle with the waiter), Robert Benchley, Heywood Broun (who has forgotten to remove his cap), Marc Connelly and Robert Sherwood. The bottle, bib and highchair await Master Johnny Weaver's return from Europe.

The Ten Best Sellers

The following books had the largest sales at Brentano's for the last week:

FICTION

"The House of Peril," by Louis Tracy (Clode). Mystery and adventure, beginning with the seating of thirteen at table.

"The Vehement Flame," by Margaret Deland (Harper). Study of the jealousy of a middle-aged woman married to a boy.

"In the Days of Poor Richard," by Irving Bacheller (Bobbs Merrill). The love story of an American youth and an English girl against the background of the Revolutionary War.

"Adrienne Toner," by Anne Douglas Sedgewick (Houghton Mifflin). The chastening of a feminine egoist.

"The House of Mohun," by George Gibbs (Appleton). Another study of the flapper, which puts the blame on her parents.

"Ashes of Achievement," by Frank Russell (Brentano).

"The Secret Places of the Heart," by H. G. Wells (Macmillan). Chiefly conversation of a middle-aged philanderer concerning his erotic difficulties.

"Peter," by E. F. Benson (Doran). Peter married for money and then fell in love with his wife.

"The Beautiful and Damned," by F. Scott Fitzgerald (Scribner). The Rake's Progress expedited by a 1922 model motorcar.

"The House of Souls," by Arthur Machen (Knopf). Tales of exotic and mystical horror, by a stylist.

GENERAL

"Behind the Mirrors," Anonymous (Putnam). Cynical sketches of America's prominent politicians.

"William de Morgan and His Wife," by A. M. W. Sterling (Henry Holt). An intimate and kindly biography of the famous novelist.

"Madame de Staël. Her Trials and Triumphs," by Andrew C. P. Haggard (Doran). The latest biographer of the most famous of all the bluestockings is also her latest conquest.

"The Conquest of Fear," by Basil King (Doubleday). Psychologized sermons, or sermonized psychology, for those who like Uplift.

"The Mind in the Making," by J. H. Robinson (Harper). H. G. Wells acclaimed this as the most notable book of the decade, or something.

"Working North from Patagonia," by Harry A. Franck (Century). A graphic picture of South America as it looks to a North American.

"The Rising Temper of the East," by Frazier Hunt (Bobbs, Merrill). An inquiry into the unrest among the subject races.

"Memoirs of a Midget," by Walter de la Mare (Knopf). A poet ventures into prose to tell of a flesh-and-blood Titania.

"The Supreme Court in United States History," by Chas. Warren (Little, Brown). Three weighty volumes upon a weighty subject.

"Up Stream," by Ludwig Lewisohn (Boni & Liveright). The making of an American, who did not like the process altogether.

An echo of Browning seems to strike upon the listening ear with the title of a book of poems announced for autumn, also by the Putnams. It is "The Barcarole of James Smith," by Herbert S. Gorman. Mr. Gorman is completing the volume at the MacDowell Colony at Peterborough, N. H., along with half a dozen other poets, among them Edwin Arlington Robinson, Padraic Colum, Eunice Tietjens, Harvey Allen and Du Bose Heyward.

Mrs. Rinehart's Success

By Isabel Paterson

THE BREAKING POINT. By Mary Roberts Rinehart. Doran.

REVIEWING a novel by Mrs. Rinehart greatly resembles, in its general futility, the activities of Diogenes as described by Rabelais; when the cynic sage, seeing the men of Athens engaged upon their daily affairs about the city, set about trundling his tub up hill and rolling it down again, leaping into it and out of it, thumping it and twirling it, and in short, performing every imaginable evolution with his strange habitation. In the end, he went back and sat in it as before, and nothing whatever had been accomplished. Nor is it of record that the citizens of Athens took any note of his activities. That may be the Vicar of Meudon's moral, and is much more to the point than Diogenes's intended satire; for the Athenians did contrive by their busyness to secure three meals a day and a bed to sleep in at night (which is infinitely more comfortable and intelligent than a tub). They had the better of the argument. So with Mrs. Rinehart; her novels are bought, and they are read.

Now if Mrs. Rinehart is the most popular and (rumor says) the highest paid fiction writer in America, there must be a very good reason. And if a critic cannot see the reason, so much the worse for critical pretensions.

Let us, then, consider Mrs. Rinehart's latest success. It hasn't been published at this moment of writing, but to call it a success is scientific reasoning, not prophecy; if a thing has always happened it is highly likely to happen again. "The Breaking Point" is a very full and characteristic example of Mrs. Rinehart's method and style. It will probably be compared with her best-liked previous work, "K," because of a few minor resemblances in the plot. The hero, Richard Livingstone, is a young physician, over whose past hangs a cloud of mystery. The story is concerned with the revelation of what lies behind that cloud. Beyond those two points the plot is as original as any plot can be, and so complicated that to relate it in full were impossible in a review. It takes the author herself all of 350 pages to do so.

Besides, it is usually considered unfair to reveal the plot of a novel in which that is the main interest. But in this case a brief glimpse can do no harm. No review can affect by one jot or tittle Mrs. Rinehart's popularity with her immense following. For one reason they don't generally read reviews, and for another they know what they want without being told, and have the moral courage to stick to their preferences. They want, first of all, to have something happen in a book; they want action, not an explanation nor an argument nor a mood, nor even a study of character. They are the people who make the "movies" the biggest industry in the country; they are, in short, the grown up children who say confidingly, "Tell us a story." And here it is.

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MRS. RINEHART always begins with a disarming show of dealing with every day folk—another reason why she gets their suffrages. She starts with just such people and circumstances as we all know; the kind of people who have chicken and ice cream for Sunday dinner, who sing in the choir and drive flivvers. There aren't any incredible villains nor preposterous heroes; no one ever indulges in melodramatic poses. If they are a bit dim as individuals, so that somtimes it is an effort to remember just who is who, one might say the same of a newly-met crowd of subway strap-hangers or baseball fans; just ordinary people. And then from this beginning the author builds up by insidious degrees, in a conversational tone of voice, so to speak, a situation that is entirely impossible and entirely plausible.

For instance, we first see her present hero, Dr. "Dick" Livingstone, merely as a rising young doctor in a prosperous small city, presumably in New England. He lives with his uncle and aunt, the former also a doctor; he is taking over the elder man's practice, instead of studying further for the more lucrative and distinguished position of a specialist. This out of gratitude for his Uncle David, who has taken the place of a father to him. Dick's father, it appears, is dead, having died ten years before on a lonely ranch in Colorado. The young doctor has just returned with honor from serving in the medical corps in the war. He is in love with a delightful girl, who loves him in return. His future life seems happily fixed and settled. And then into this peaceful scene drifts a small rumor, no more than the gossip of an idle woman, who has just returned from a visit to the West. She says that while in Colorado she met several people who had known David Livingstone's brother, Henry, Dick's father—and none of those old acquaintances ever heard that Henry Livingstone had a son! Then who is Dick Livingstone?

The question is like the whisper that legend says may start an avalanche. An unknown past crashes down on the young doctor—unknown to himself, as well as his sweetheart and friends. For he could not remember the first twenty years of his life. Within a month the memories of his youth, dormant for ten years, come back to him, wiping out the intervening time; and he finds himself a hunted man, fleeing from a charge of murder, under a name he had utterly forgotten, burdened with remorse and tortured by a desperate infatuation for a woman whom he must never see again and whose life he believes he has spoiled. His uncle, his hame, his betrothed, all the clean and honorable years of labor and achievement, are clean gone from his consciousness, flooded away in this uprush of the submerged past. Even when he is told of them he can make nothing of the story, nor feel anything but a dull impersonal regret for those other broken lives added to his account. He is not Dr. Richard Livingstone; he is Judson Clark, the wastrel heir of a millionaire, who once made New York "sit up" by his spectacular wooing of a beautiful actress, Beverly Carlysle, and later was blazoned in screaming headlines as the killer of Beverly's husband.

How this could have come about in the first place, and how these two diametrically opposed characters are finally fused into one, constitute the story. It takes all Mrs. Rinehart's extraordinary natural facility and acquired skill to do it, but in the end she leaves not a single loose thread. The action is so smooth and continuous that nowhere is credibility strained to the breaking point; it is only by pausing to consider that one sees it is intrincally impossible; that the long arm of coincidence and the main strength of the author have both been employed to hoist the plot over its difficulties. Just as an achievement, it calls to mind the "Song of the Banjo": "And when the thing that couldn't has occurred, give me time to change my leg and go again."

There you are; Mrs. Rinehart naturally writes the kind of story that the majority of people naturally like—and she does it a great deal better than any one else.

Possibly humor would be out of place in a tale of such tragic incident; but one misses what Mrs. Rinehart easily supplies in other stories. (Thus much just to be critical.)

Mrs. Burnett's "Robin"

By Frances Parkinson Keyes

ROBIN. By Frances Hodgson Burnett. New York. Frederick A. Stockes Company.

IT IS hard to consider "Robin" as an individual story, apart from "The Head of the House of Coombe," to which it is not a sequel but a continuation. The two were published as one in magazine form, very much, but very well, cut. In book form the author's original manuscript has been left intact, and much that was of necessity lost when it appeared as a serial is now given out for the first time. It is all worth reading, but there is too much of it to compress between the covers of a single book, and since the reading public no longer welcomes two-volume novels, there was nothing to do but to bring out the two parts with a lapse of several months between. To analyze them separately is, however, more difficult than to publish them separately.

The second part of the story is written with the same exquisite art and delicacy of feeling as the first. The refinement, the freshness, the flowing smoothness and polished finish of Mrs. Burnett's writing have never been brought to such a pinnacle of perfection as in her latest work. The narrative runs with the clearness of a pure, cool mountain stream, in contrast to the turgid and muddy waters which much of the fiction of the day resembles. Every page is a delight both from a literary and an æsthetic point of view. It surpasses in beauty of diction anything that has been written—to the present reviewer's knowledge at least—within recent years.

The character drawing is as masterly as the style. Robin, the lonely little girl of "the slice of a house" in Mayfair, so carefully studied in "The Head of the House of Coombe," is about eighteen years old and ethereally lovely in the story that bears her name; while Donal, the child-lover, who was so precipitately separated from her because his loving but somewhat austere mother feared any possible contact with Feather's daughter, comes back to her as a magnificent young creature of twenty, loving her still more hotly and impatiently than before. Their love affair, recommencing in the early days of the war, would have had a disastrous ending without the thoughtful watchfulness of the Duchess of Darte, Lord Coombe and Dowie, the nurse—all old friends. Not a single new character is introduced to us, but those we already knew prove worthy of the welcome we were waiting to give them. We move in a circle of gentlefolk, of English men and women of culture and dignity and fine understanding. If the style of the book is a relief, the society into which it takes us is an even greater one. It is a far cry from "Main Street" to Mayfair. We do not regret it.

If the story falls short in any sense, it is in plot. There is nothing new or original about this, and if it were not so very well done, there would be times when it would seem both melodramatic and impossible. But when a painting is as sincere and true and beautiful as this one, it is only a hardened critic who would complain because it has flaws. "Robin" should be hung in a place of honor in the gallery of the year, and decorated with the ribbon of distinction that belongs only to the winner of a great prize.

Books of Yesteryear

CHELKASH. By Maxim Gorky. Translated from the Russian. Alfred A. Knopf.

GORKY was not much more than a youth when he wrote this, his first masterpiece; but his vagrant, bitter life had already resulted in a huge burden of experience. Of the sea, at least, he could write without having to impute a motivating sordidness to it. For him it always would be grand, admirable. But of the harbor it was different; for here the "symphonies of the laborious day" conveyed to him the meanings of men's industry . . . meanings which he was compelled to read from underneath. In this grim Russian port, whose scene opens the story, one's ear is quickly attuned to an ominous note. It is a somber portrayal, weighty with significance.

Which serves well to introduce "Chelkash," a lean old vulture among the riff-raff of the shore. He is a harbor pirate, a bird of prey, cunning, masterful, ragged and possessing unlimited credit at the inn. It is the business of Chelkash to ride the shadows of night in a small boat, to steer in silent expeditions over waters watched by the sentinels of law. Such enterprises are rich in possibilities; it is no dull life; for a bale of silk means wealth, and a false move brings swift calamity. It was within his resources easily to steal a skiff for the job on hand; but some one was necessary to row. So chance, operating in the vast theater of Russia, throws his way a rustic from far-off fields, a stranger to the sea, a peasant cub away from his element, seeking fortune and without the stomach for high adventure. These opposite creatures, united for the moment by necessity, embark upon the perilous task of diverting merchandise from its intended destination.

Chelkash loved the sea. "On the sea there always arose within him a broad, warm feeling embracing his whole soul, and for a time purifying him from the filth of earthly life. . . . At night on the sea can be heard the soft murmur of the sea's slumbrous breathing, that incomprehensible sound which pours peace into the soul of man, and caressingly tanning his evil impulses, awakes within him mighty musings."

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AS FOR Gabriel, the shades of night had reduced him to a state of terror. He snivelled and rowed desperately. In the darkness they reach a ship and Chelkash hoists himself aboard, dissolving into the inky void above the head of the demoralized youth. The sea then, to Gabriel, "was dumb and dreary with black clouds all over it. Huge and heavy, they were moving slowly along, drawing their horror from the gloom and ready to stifle man beneath their heaviness."

The tale approaches its conclusion in company with the rising of a storm. Gabriel is troubled with visions of easy wealth; but he would rather plead with than fight Chelkash. They land on the beach, prepared to part company; for the enterprise is finished. There is a scuffle upon the sand and Chelkash is struck from behind. The waves run high and the sea scud flies about in the air. . . . Soon the rain "poured down in torrents, decending from the sky in long, thin jets, weaving a whole net of water-threads." Chelkash, with a broken head, staggers on toward the town, and Gabriel—with the rubles—marches off in the opposite direction. "The rain was now pouring down more densely than ever from the clouds in fine endless jets, enveloping the steppe in an impenetrable mist of steely hue." It was a curtain, behind which nothing could be seen; while the sea and everything around was filled with howling and huge waves crashed upon the beach.

"Soon the rain and the wash of the waves had cleansed the red spot on the place where Chelkash had lain, had washed away all traces of Chelkash and all traces of the young rustic from the sand of the seashore. And on the desolate strand nothing remained as a memorial of the petty drama played there by two living souls." Such are the effects produced when Gorky croons over the darlings of his brain, in concert with the untamed sublimities of the elements.

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